

## **Dog-friendly dining spots abound on The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel**

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If your sweet pup gets that forlorn, hang-dog look as you depart for a night on the town, consider a change of plans.

Florida law leaves it up to restaurant proprietors to decide whether to welcome man's best friend to the outdoor dining spaces of their establishments.

Fortunately, around The Beaches of Fort Myers & Sanibel, many restaurants are as hospitable to four-legged visitors as they are to the two-legged variety.

But some go further in extending the doggy welcome mat than others.

Bell Tower Shops in south Fort Myers has several restaurants that offer outdoor dining – Bistro 41, Cru, Blue Pointe Oyster Bar and Grimaldi's, among them – and they are all pet friendly. In fact, from 6 to 8 p.m. on the second Friday of the month, it's Yappy Hour at the shopping center and dogs are the honored guests, with many shops offering water and treats.

Downtown Fort Myers is welcoming, too, with its many cafes and restaurants offering sidewalk dining. United Ale House, Downtown House of Pizza, Capone's, Ford's Garage and Los Cabos all allow people to dine with their pets in tow at outdoor tables.

When it comes to special treatment, there are some spots that truly show their pedigree.

Big Blue Brewing (239-471-2777 or [bigbluebrewing.com](http://bigbluebrewing.com)) not only welcomes furry customers, it furnishes them with a canine menu that includes bones and a much-lauded (by doggy diners) chicken and rice dish.

On the first Saturday of every month, Cork Soakers (239-542-6622 or [corksoakers.net](http://corksoakers.net)) in Cape Coral holds Doggy Daze 1-5 p.m., during which dogs are honored and their humans enjoy discounted beverages.

At Dog Bones Café, behind Cap'n Fishbones at the Shell Factory (995-2141, [shellfactory.com](http://shellfactory.com)), dogs can wander off leash and play with other visiting pups.

There's a dog park with an agility course and doggy fountain and, at 9:30 a.m. Sundays, there's Doggy Church. Dogs are permitted throughout the attraction except for the main restaurant and nature park.

Cantina Sol (239-599-2849, [cantinasol.com](http://cantinasol.com)) at Marintown in North Fort Myers features waterfront outdoor dining with a pet-friendly deck and dog menu.

Go to any Starbucks and order something for yourself and you can also order a Puppucino, a frothy cup of whipped cream from the store's secret menu just for canines. Your dog will love you and so will your wallet because it's free.

Salty Papa's Shrimp House (483-7373, [saltypapsshrimphouse.com](http://saltypapsshrimphouse.com)) in the Iona-McGregor area of south Fort Myers, caters to the canine palate with water, biscuits and goodies like ground beef or chicken.

Here are some other spots that welcome furry four-legged customers.

### **Bonita Springs**

Survey Café (992-2233 or [surveycafedowntown.com](http://surveycafedowntown.com)) – In the heart of downtown Bonita Springs, this charming house is a warm and welcoming café, serving sandwiches and hot dishes, coffee and muffins. People and dogs welcome.

Zorba's (992-5005 or [zorbasgrille.com](http://zorbasgrille.com)) –Opa! Chow down on hearty Greek fare while your dog enjoys a night on the town.

### **Buckingham (east Lee County)**

Buckingham Farms (206-2303, [buckinghamfarmsonline.com](http://buckinghamfarmsonline.com)) – This lovely farm epitomizes the farm-to-table movement, serving what's grown there on a covered outdoor dining area with ceiling fans whirring soothingly overhead. There's even a dog-walk area here.

### **Cape Coral**

Fathoms (542-0123, [fathomsrestaurant.com](http://fathomsrestaurant.com)) – This Cape Harbour hotspot has a sprawling deck that overlooks the water and an upscale marina with excellent sightseeing for man and beast.

Paradise Deli (282-2378 or [paradisedelicc.com](http://paradisedelicc.com)) – More than a deli, this dining spot offers classic deli fair and so much more. It welcomes the whole family, including dogs.

Rumrunners (542-0200, rumrunnersrestaurant.com) – A Cape Harbour favorite, this restaurant offers two large outdoor dining spaces that provide great views of the water and the wildlife that abounds. Sure to please discriminating dogs.

### **Fort Myers**

Cape Cod Fish Co. (313-6462 or capecodfishco.com) – A super-casual spot offering New England-style seafood. There's shaded outdoor dining and the staff love dogs, offering water and treats.

Fat Katz (768-3541, fatkatzsportsbistro.com) – This gourmet sports bar just off Daniels Parkway offers covered outdoor seating that makes it far more comfortable to consume your stuffed grape leaves, short rib quesadillas, pierogies, shrimp BLT and other made-from-scratch items while Fido relaxes in the shade.

### **Fort Myers Beach**

Nervous Nellie's (463-8077 or nervousnellies.net) – Situated along Matanzas Pass on Fort Myers Beach, the restaurant features a voluminous menu and welcomes pets.

Parrot Key Caribbean Grill (463-3257 or myparrotkey.com) -- An open-air restaurant on the waterfront, it reserves an area for people and pets, supplying bowls and water for pooches.

### **Pine Island**

Miceli's (282-8233 or micelis-italian.com) – Dogs and their people love waterfront dining and Miceli's is well-equipped to provide it to one and all in Matlacha.

Woody's Waterside (283-5555 or woodysislandrumandgrille.com) – St. James City is a quiet little community and Woody's is a fine place to kick back, enjoy an adult beverage – or a nice cold bowl of water – at this casual food and watering hole named after Woody, the owner's beloved and departed yellow Labrador retriever.

### **Sanibel Island**

Cip's Place (472-0223 or cipsplace.com) – Lunch, dinner or happy hour are all great reasons to grab an outdoor table at Cip's, where dogs get their own dishes of water.

Island Cow (472-0606 or sanibelislandcow.com) – It may be cows that get the love in the name, but dogs are welcomed with water, ice and treats at this popular casual family spot.

George and Wendy's (395-1263 or sanibelseafoodgrille.com) – This seafood restaurant is known to dote on its doggy guests as much as its human ones.

Over Easy Café (472-2625 or overeasycafesanibel.com) – A super-popular breakfast and lunch joint, this one wins points with the canine set, too, where water and treats are liberally dispensed.

**Some basic tips for taking your dog out to dine:**

- \*It's always best to call ahead and ensure that your dog will be welcome.
- \*Find out what the restaurant offers – bowls with water? Treats or food? If not, plan to bring your own.
- \*Bring a small blanket for your pet to lie on. Florida sidewalks can get very warm and, although many of the restaurants have shaded areas, the ground can be uncomfortable, especially for older pets.
- \*Make sure your dog is up to date on vaccinations before allowing it to come into contact with other dogs.
- \*Keep the contact information of a 24/7 veterinary clinic with you at all times. While it is rare, accidents (and dog disputes) sometimes happen and it's best to be prepared. In Lee County, there's Florida Veterinary Referral Center and 24 Hour Emergency Hospital in Estero, (239) 992-8878; Specialized Veterinary Services in Fort Myers, (239) 947-0588; and Viscaya-Prado Veterinary Hospital in Cape Coral (239) 574-2868.